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An aid to the classroom teacher in the teaching of human relations is presented. Sociodrama, or role-playing, is primarily useful in solving problems involving relationships among two or more persons. It therefore provides a valuable learning experience in schools which are concerned with the social development of boys and girls, with moral and spiritual education, with helping children achieve their developmental tasks, and with the personal-social needs of their pupils. It is often easier for children to solve their own problems if they can stand off and look at them through the eyes of someone else. Also, role-playing provides an opportunity for persons to experiment with better ways of dealing with situations.

The method presented has the teacher read aloud to her pupils a carefully structured story of a typical life-situation of childhood. The story has no ending, but terminates in a dilemma peak. The listening children are then encouraged to finish the story as they thought it would actually end, in role-playing sessions. The steps the teacher should use include acquainting the children with the problem at hand, selecting the participants, preparing the audience to observe alertly, role-playing, discussing and evaluating, re-playing the revised roles, and sharing experiences and generalizing.

The place of role-playing in the curriculum is important; for only after children have learned to meet their own interpersonal problems are they ready to identify with, and to attempt to resolve, those problems in intergroup education which are not directly pertinent to their immediate life-situations.

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GUIDELINES: CLASSROOM
INTERGROUP EDUCATION PRACTICES

AN INTERGROUP EDUCATION PAMPHLET

ED002004

Role Playing
The Problem Story

An Approach to Human Relations in the Classroom

by

GEORGE and FANNIE R. SHAFTEL

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Office of Education-EEOP
Research and Materials Branch

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

Bennett O. Stelvey

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Office of Education-EEOP
Research and Materials Branch

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	FOREWORD	4
	INTRODUCTION	7
I	A TYPICAL PROBLEM STORY SESSION	12
II	HOW TO GUIDE A ROLE-PLAYING SESSION	23
III	THE PROBLEM STORY	37
IV	ROLE-PLAYING AND ITS PLACE IN THE CURRICULUM	45
V	STORIES IN INTERGROUP RELATIONS	51
VI	SPECIAL USES OF THE PROBLEM STORY	61
VII	IN SUMMARY	71
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	75

FOREWORD

Role-Playing The Problem Story is one of a series of pamphlets which the National Conference of Christians and Jews is publishing as an aid to the classroom teacher in the teaching of human relations. This pamphlet will have great value for both elementary and secondary teachers who have been in doubt as to the techniques of role-playing and its values as an educational experience. The clarity with which the authors have explained how the teacher prepares the class for role-playing, selects the participants, utilizes the audience as active observers, discusses and evaluates the role-playing, reassigns roles or provides for replaying revised roles, and leads the class in sharing experiences and generalizing will be greatly appreciated by many teachers. Teachers who have had little or no experience with role-playing, others who understand the theory but need practical and concrete examples, will find the pamphlet instructive and useful.

Sociodrama, or role-playing, is primarily useful in solving problems involving relationships among two or more persons. It therefore provides a valuable learning experience in schools which are concerned with the social development of boys and girls, with moral and spiritual education, with helping children achieve their developmental tasks, and with the personal-social needs of their pupils. If real learning is to take place, the problems with which the sociodrama deals must be crucial life situations in the lives of the boys and girls participating in the sociodrama.

Often it is easier for children, or adults for that matter, to solve their own problems if they can stand off and look at them through the eyes of someone else or if they see that their problems are not unique, that other people have similar ones. The problem story provides the opportunity when it

deals with a problem real and meaningful to children. It is in the use of the problem story situation with role-playing that this pamphlet makes an outstanding contribution both to intergroup education and to the use of sociodrama in the classroom.

Role-playing has another value in that it permits an individual to achieve empathy with another person; to understand how one feels who is rejected, mistreated, accused unjustly, persecuted, or who behaves irrationally because of frustrations which he has not learned to handle wisely. "Deepened sensitivity and insight into the problems and life of oneself and others is the cornerstone on which improved intergroup relations will rest."

One of the reasons moral and spiritual education has not been more effective is that we have tried to achieve our objectives through exhortation and admonition. All that we know about how learning takes place would indicate that telling children the answers to their problems, talking to them, and exhorting them to right action are not very effective. Children need to solve their own problems and reach their own decisions, they need to experience a situation, "step into another's shoes and feel what the other feels," understand the effect of their actions upon others, and work through a problem before they can arrive at a solution which is satisfactory to them.

Problem solving is not an easy task. Learning to weigh the effects of a course of action, to make a choice in terms of democratic values, and to act in accordance with these values takes time and requires judgment and social sensitivity. Role-playing not only permits mistakes but it provides opportunity for persons to experiment with better ways of dealing with situations. Through criticisms, suggestions, reenactments, and differences of opinions, principles of conduct can be developed which the child will accept because he understands them and has had a part in determining them.

It is the belief of the National Conference of Christians and Jews in presenting this pamphlet that teachers will find

it practical and useful. Helping children to understand themselves and others, to develop social skills and attitudes, to think critically, and to be concerned with the welfare of others are basic in democratic education. This pamphlet, in showing teachers how they can achieve these objectives by providing reality practice in crucial life situations, has furthered both intergroup relations and democratic education.

The authors are especially well-qualified for the task they have accomplished in this pamphlet. Dr. Fannie R. Shaftel is Associate Professor of Education, School of Education, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California. As a classroom teacher, supervisor, and university professor, Dr. Shaftel has steadily contributed to the improvement of teaching. Her special field has been elementary education. Mr. George Shaftel is a professional writer working in both fiction and non-fiction fields. He shares his wife's keen interest in the teaching of children. In the present pamphlet, Mr. Shaftel has joined efforts with his wife to produce creative, meaningful materials that will make the work of teaching more vital and effective.

LAVONE A. HANNA
Professor of Education
San Francisco State College

INTRODUCTION

USING THE PROBLEM STORY

". . . childhood must be viewed
realistically as a period of recurring
crises and problem-solving dilemmas."
O. H. Mowrer and C. Kluckhohn,
Dynamic Theory of Personality

The teacher stopped reading. Her audience of sixth grade children sat in taut silence.

A boy eased out a long breath, and demanded, "Is that all?"

The teacher said, "I told you that this story stops, but is not finished. Suppose we finish it ourselves. What would *you* do, Larry, if you were Steve in this story?"

"I don't think Steve's mother was fair."

From all sides of the classroom came excited comments.

"I'd run way from home."

"Danny should be punished."

"Oh, no, he shouldn't! Why, gosh, if I - - -"

During the reading of the story, the children had groaned, gasped, and even remarked aloud as the boy in the narrative had got deeper and deeper into trouble. A visitor in the room would have felt a quality of tense, emotion-laden interest in the situation not typical of classroom routine.

The class proceeded to act out solutions to the problem faced by Steve in the story, attempting through spontaneous dramatization to solve Steve's dilemma. The children were frank and free with their comments—so sympathetic, so caught up in the story illusion, so thoroughly identified with the issues and the characters, that they seemed completely unself-conscious.

This class was not one that was especially experienced with sociodrama. Their reactions were typical of numerous classroom groups with which the problem-story approach to role-playing has been tried.

This pamphlet presents a brief account of the problem-story approach to role-playing.

The method described here, in simple terms, is this: the teacher reads aloud to her pupils a carefully structured story of a typical life-situation of childhood. The story has no ending, but terminates in a dilemma peak. The listening children are then encouraged to finish the story, as they think it would actually end, in role-playing sessions.

Children in a wide range of schools, in California and Michigan and Missouri, have been equally concerned and responsive when such experimental stories about human relations were read to them—because the narratives deal with the crucial life-situations of boys and girls everywhere: the daily problems they meet in the job of growing up.

Ability to handle such problems must be acquired. This process does not happen in a vacuum. As a young person learns ways of dealing with his troubles, in the special cultural setting of which he is a part, he also learns values and attitudes and ways of behaving.

If we wish to work seriously with the feelings of children, we must concern ourselves more than ever before with the life situations of children *which are important to them.* Usually, the school has set up certain learning situations to which pupils are expected to respond in "accept-

able" ways. And youngsters have learned to put on a cloak of school behavior that fits the demands of teachers.

But children live through many of their most crucial situations outside the classroom: on the sand lot, the playground, the neighborhood street, and in the home. It is in these situations that many tensions are built up and conflicts resolved to the best of children's abilities.

Today's youngster is tossed back and forth by the cross-currents of the contemporary scene. If his parents are migratory workers, he has the problem of never putting down roots, never belonging to a group. If he is a middle-class child, he is subject to all the anxieties and pressures of his class—such as appropriate clothing, manners, care of property, parental levels of aspiration, and related concerns.

If he is a child of a broken home, he may have problems of adjusting to two sets of parents and even two sets of brothers and sisters. Or, he may be presented with one code of behavior at school and find another one operating in his home and neighborhood.

In direct proportion to the complexities and tensions of present-day life, children build anxieties, fears, and angers which eventually affect their personality structures. Increasingly, teachers are realizing that a vital function of the school is that of helping children to understand their own life-situations and to develop adequate ways of meeting their problems and releasing tensions.

If you are a ten-year-old and smarting under the requirement that you look after a younger brother after school, it helps to know that the other ten-year-olds in your classroom have the same burden.

It *also* helps to explore the reasons why your mother demands this help from you and to begin to understand, under teacher-guidance, your mother's problem. Mothers, too, need time off, especially in homes in which there are no aunts or grandmothers to help out.

A program in intergroup education is at best fragmentary unless it recognizes that:

- The experiences young children have will build into their personalities some basic attitudes toward other people.
- Children need to explore the critical life-situations in which they find themselves, with opportunities to try solutions for these problems, *under skillful educational guidance,* and with the support and criticism of their peers.

After children have investigated "how it feels to be different" on their own everyday level of experience—i.e., as the red-head, or the boy who wears glasses, or the youngster who limps—they may be able and ready to identify with "how it feels to be a Negro in a white culture" and with other facts of intergroup relations. Deepened sensitivity and insight into the problems and life of oneself and others is the cornerstone on which improved intergroup relations will rest.

The special values of role-playing. If we take various life problems of children and play them out in the classroom, using the technics of role-playing, we can help children *explore their feelings about the situations in life which most fundamentally shape their attitudes and values.* We can bridge the artificial barrier of the school walls and bring the typical problems of the family, the neighborhood, and playground into the classroom where children can work on them and resolve them with the help of the group and the mature guidance of their teacher.

In spontaneous dramatization (role-playing or sociodrama, as it is variously called) pupils can be permitted to make a wrong choice and find out for themselves that it is not satisfactory. Since they are only practicing, they can discard a choice when it proves inadequate or undesirable, and try another solution.

An important element in sociodrama is the procedure of going into action immediately, without much discussion

or planning. The first acting of roles is, therefore, impulsive and *spontaneous*, and reveals the immediate feelings of pupils about the problem involved rather than how they think adults *want* them to feel and act. If we are to help pupils to modify attitudes, we must first get the youngsters to reveal frankly what they would do in a problem situation. Then we have something to work with. Then the class and the teacher can explore together, through discussion and problem-solving procedures, the consequences of the various suggestions offered.

Two facts stand out in experience with role-playing problem stories:

- Children enjoy unrehearsed dramatics, are eager for it, can't get enough of it, and keep asking for more.
- Dramatic stories posing realistic problems provide great impetus for launching young people into serious thinking and discussion.

Children are quick to apply generalizations they draw from debate to their own life situations. The teacher may help her pupils to express their feelings about troubles which had caused them some anguish. She may guide them into describing the ways in which they had solved their own dilemmas, and thereby give the whole class actual incidents to examine and dissect and evaluate. After discussing these personal examples, the teacher can ask if the children would solve the problems they had described in the same way, *now*, as they had at the time the incidents happened.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate the acutely sensitive responsiveness of children to problems involving their own real needs would be to review in condensed form a typical problem-story session. Such a session can open up many ways in which children can see themselves with greater clarity and more secure judgment. Such a session can also open up insights into the lives of others.

PART I

A TYPICAL PROBLEM STORY SESSION

5th GRADERS ROLE-PLAY "CLUB-HOUSE BOAT"

The following example is the record of a sociodrama session in a school in which the faculty had become concerned over a sustained wave of anti-social behavior among pupils.

Role-playing is often used in a classroom to fill an urgent need. In this particular case, the problem-story CLUB-HOUSE BOAT (one of a group prepared by the authors) was selected because its basic issue, honesty, seemed to fit the troubling situation in the school. It was chosen also because it dealt with conflict between parental standards of conduct and the peer code, which was pertinent to the school situation.

The school is an attractive, modern building set in a rapidly growing suburban area. The families of the district consist of two distinct groups; migrant workers who have settled down amidst the small farms in which the area was divided ten years ago and have built their own very modest homes, and a new population of middle-class families who are building a district that is a typical big-city suburb.

The school faculty felt that the anti-social behavior of children of low economic background arose out of deprivation and a philosophy of get-what-you-can. Misbehavior among children of more privileged background was interpreted as often due to their being over-indulged and over-supervised. The teachers agreed that it was necessary to explore the human relations needs of their pupils.

Sociometric studies were undertaken. Some teachers were using reaction stories selected from such lists as *Read*

ing Ladders in Human Relations published by the American Council on Education in cooperation with the National Conference of Christians and Jews. It was decided that the 5th and 6th grade teachers would explore the contribution that the problem-story approach might make.

The following record is an example of a 5th grade experience with role-playing a problem-story.

ACTION	*INTERPRETATION*
Teacher: "Do you remember, the other day, we had a discussion about Janey's lunch money? Because she had put her money in her pocket and had not given it to me when she came into the room, it was lost. We had quite a talk about finding money: whether to keep it or turn it in.	*Utilizing an actual school incident to open up a problem area. Sensitizing pupils to the problems.*
"Sometimes it's not easy to decide what to do. Do you ever have times when you just don't know *what* to do? (THERE ARE NODS IN THE GROUP.)	*Creating a permissive environment: recognizing that it is not always easy to find a socially acceptable solution to a dilemma.*
"I would like to read you a story this afternoon about a boy who found himself in just such a spot. He really didn't know how to decide. This will be one of those problem stories which stop, but are not finished."	*Children indicate how meaningful the problem is for them by bodily and facial responses.*
A Pupil: "Like the one we did last week?"	*Preparing the class to identify with the main character.*
Teacher: "Yes."	*This class had already experienced several problem sessions.*
A Pupil: "Oh!—but can't you give us one with an ending?"	*This response is quite typical. Children are used to the "happy ending" pattern. The satisfaction that comes with increased ability to tackle and solve problems*
Teacher: "When you get into a jam, does someone always come along and tell you how your problem will end?"	

Pupils: "Oh, no! Not very often."

Teacher: "In life, we usually have to make our own endings —we have to solve our problems ourselves. That's why I'm reading you these problem-stories—so that we can *practice* endings—try out many different ones to see which work the best for us.

"As I read this story, you might be thinking of what you would do if you were in Tommy Haines' place."

(TEACHER READS THE STORY, entitled "CLUB-HOUSE BOAT." (In summary):

Tommy Haines belongs to a club which the boys have organized in the neighborhood, the Mountain Lions. An uncle of one of the boys agrees to give them a houseboat for a club if they will have it repaired and docked in the town's yacht harbor.

Tommy agrees to pay his share of the repair bill, twenty dollars. He is confident that he can manage this, because he is earning money as delivery boy for a drugstore.

To his dismay, his father refuses to let him participate, insisting that he must put his earnings in the bank.

This places Tommy in difficulty with his gang. They have had the boat repaired and owe money for it. Pete "borrows"

develops slowly, and through opportunit face problems.

Preparing the cla listen purposefully. is a very important of the process.

The story consti an extended warm-u preparation for r playing. Characters actions are deline and the problem s tion is developed t critical point.

the money for Tommy out of a purse which had been left in his Dad's taxicab by a patron.

Tommy, frantic to get together the amount he owes his gang, resorts to small subterfuges, deliberately working to talk people into giving him tips, not telling his folks that he has earned tips, or that he has been given a raise in pay, and even keeping several small sums given him in overpayment on orders.

Finally, the boys are in difficulty. The woman returns for her purse, and Pete's parents learn that he took money from it. They threaten to go to all the boys' fathers unless the money is returned by the next morning.

The boys manage to chip in some more money, but cannot raise enough. They insist that Tommy find the balance needed.

Tommy worries. Then, after delivering a package for the druggist, Tommy discovers that the customer had made a mistake and overpaid him $5. Enough to clear the debt to the gang!

Tommy is deeply tempted. He stands in front of the customer's closed door. Shall he knock and return the money?—or shall he leave and keep the money he needs so badly?

Teacher: "What do you think Tommy will do?"

A Pupil: "I think he'll keep

Stimulating the
to explore possibl
tions.

the money!"

Teacher: "Yes? —"

A Pupil: "Because he needs to pay the club."

A Pupil: "Oh, no, he won't. He'll get found out, and he knows it."

A Pupil: "How can he? Nobody can prove anything."

Teacher: (to this last student) "Would you like to come up here, Jerry, and be Tommy? (JERRY COMES TO THE FRONT OF THE ROOM.) Jerry, whom will you need to help you?"

Jerry: "I'll need somebody to be the customer. And I'll need boys to be the gang."

A spontaneous expression which probably reveals an impulse.

Analyzing the problem.

Anticipating consequences.

Expressing a personal philosophy.

The teacher deliberately chooses the boy who expresses an anti-social solution.

Encouraging the pupil to describe his solution and situation himself.

(PLAYERS ARE CHOSEN.) The teacher invites several children to participate. The setting is arranged. One corner of the classroom is the school where the gang is waiting for Tommy to come with the needed money. A chair is placed in another corner to represent the door of the house to which the package is delivered.

Teacher: "Where are you going to start, Jerry?"

Jerry: "I'll deliver the package."

Teacher: "Very well, Now, you people, as you watch, consider whether Jerry's way of

While children are never urged to play roles which they do not "feel," occasionally a child needs to be encouraged to participate.

Setting the stage.

The teacher helps describe the furnishings needed and helps arrange them quickly.

Preparing the class to be participating observers.

ending the story is the way you think it would end. Perhaps you'll have different ideas about it; and when Jerry's finished, we can try your ideas."

FIRST ENACTMENT

Pretend level.

A chair is used to designate the door.

(TOMMY KNOCKS ON DOOR. THE BOY PLAYING ROLE OF OLD MAN "OPENS" THE DOOR.)

Tommy: "Delivery from Central Drugstore, sir. Eleven dollars and twenty-eight cents due."

Man: "Here you are. And here's a quarter. Buy yourself a Cadillac."

(MAN CLOSES DOOR. TOMMY COUNTS MONEY. DISCOVERS HE HAS BEEN OVERPAID $5. RAISES HAND TO KNOCK ON DOOR AND CALL MAN BACK—THEN TURNS AWAY. WALKS ACROSS THE CLASSROOM TO THE WAITING GANG.)

This boy chooses to "get away with it." His enactment is an expression of the ethical values and the anti-social behavior which has been causing concern among the school faculty.

Tommy: "Hey, guys, look! I got the money we need. Here!"

Eddy: "Swell! Now we can pay for the boat. Come on, gang!"

END OF ENACTMENT

Teacher: "Well, Jerry has given us one solution. What do you think of it?"

Encouraging an evaluation. The teacher is careful to be non-committal.

A Pupil: "Uh—uh! It won't work!"

A judgment.

Jerry: "Why not?"

A Pupil: "That man is going to remember how much money he had. He'll phone the druggist about it."

Jerry: "So what? He can't prove anything on me. I'll just say he didn't overpay me."

A Pupil: "You'll lose your job."

Jerry: "When they can't prove it?"

Another Pupil: "Yes. Even if they can't prove it!"

Teacher: "Why do you think so, John?"

John: Because the druggist has to be on the side of his customer. He can fire Tommy and hire another boy. But he doesn't want his customers mad at him."

A Pupil: "He's going to feel pretty sick inside, if he keeps the money."

Teacher: "What do you mean?"

Pupil: "Well, it bothers you when you know you've done something wrong."

Teacher: "Do you have any other way to solve this problem?"

Pupil: "Yes. Tommy should knock on the door and tell the customer about being overpaid. Maybe the man'll let Tommy keep the money."

Teacher: "All right, let's try it your way, Dick."

It happens that Jerry was a boy of low mental ability; he was quite sure of himself.

An analysis of consequences.

Other consequences are here foreseen—anxiety and guilt.

Encouraging further expression.

Exploring for other solutions.

A proposal with a wishful (fantasy) solution.

The teacher follows through. The conse-

(NEW ROLE-PLAYERS ARE SELECTED, AND THE SCENE IS SET.)

quences of fantasy solutions should be explored.

SECOND ENACTMENT

(Tommy delivers the parcel, is paid; the door is shut. He discovers that he has been overpaid $5.)

Tommy: "Gosh, I better knock and call that man back!"

(HE KNOCKS)

Man: (OPENING DOOR) "What is it, son?"

Tommy: "Sir, you overpaid me five dollars."

Man: "I did! Well—You're an honest boy. Tell you what—You *keep* the change."

END OF ENACTMENT

Teacher: "What about *this* solution?"

The teacher remains non-committal.

Several Pupils: "It's all right! It's fine. That settles everything."

The class accepts a fantasy solution.

Teacher: "Do you think this could *really* happen?"

The teacher pushes for a realistic evaluation.

Pupil: "Yes. Because once I got overpaid for my paper delivery, and when I told the man, he said 'keep it'."

Generalizing from personal experience.

Teacher: "How much money did he overpay you?"

Exploring the analogy for parallels.

Pupil: "A dollar and a quarter."

Teacher: "Do you think it might be different with *five* dollars?"

Again pushing for reality.

Pupil: "Yes. That's too much. He might give you a dollar tip."

A more realistic evaluation.

Teacher: "How do the rest of you feel about this?"	*Involving the rest of the class.*
(THE CLASS AGREES THAT FEW ADULTS WOULD TIP FIVE DOLLARS.)	
"Then, how shall Tommy solve his problem?"	*Guiding the class to see that they have not yet found a realistic solution to the story.*
A Pupil: "I think he should talk it over with his mother."	*This is probably the pupil's pattern of dealing with troubling dilemmas.*
Teacher: "Why his mother, Alice?"	*The mechanisms that work for some?*
Alice: "Well, when my Dad says no, I ask my mother."	
(GRINS AND NODS FROM THE GROUP)	
Teacher: "Is that the way it works for you all?"	*Again exploring with the class.*
A Pupil: "No, it's the other way around in our house."	
Another Pupil: "My folks stick together. Kids just don't have a chance."	*Different families have different relationships.*
Teacher: "You feel that grown-ups just don't understand?"	*Reflecting a child's thoughts so that he may explore further.*
A Pupil: "Well, sometimes they jump to conclusions."	
Teacher: "Do you feel that Tommy's parents were wrong?"	*Guiding the thinking.*
A Pupil: "No. Tommy had no business promising so much money without asking his parents."	*A judgment made.*
A Pupil: "That was too much money for kids to spend."	
A Pupil: "But once he promised it, his dad should have helped him out."	*A concept of the father role.*
A Pupil: "My mother would help me out of a jam!"	*A mother-child relationship expressed.*
Teacher: "Would you like to	*The teacher seizes the*

play this, Sally, the way you think it could happen with your mother?"

opportunity to explore a constructive solution, now that the class has already explored an anti-social solution and a fantasy solution.

THIRD ENACTMENT

(Tommy and Sally; the setting is Tommy's home.)

Tommy: "Mom, I'm in an awful jam!"

Mother: "What's the trouble, Tommy?"

(TOMMY TELLS HIS MOTHER THE WHOLE STORY.)

Mother: "Why, Tommy, you should have told me sooner. Here, you pay the money (OPENS PURSE) and we'll talk this over with your Dad when he comes home."

Mother will help, but children do get punished, in this version.

END OF ENACTMENT

Teacher: "What will happen now?"

Probing for consequences.

A Pupil: "Tommy will get a licking!"

Teacher: "How do you feel about that?"

A Pupil: "It's all right. I'd rather have the licking and get it off my mind."

Reaching a definite attitude on the problem.

Teacher: "Does this sound familiar, class? Do you know of an instance in which a boy or girl had to make such a decision?"

Tying the situation in with known experience in a non-threatening way. If child wishes, he may describe someone else's experience rather than admit his own mistakes.

Jim: "Yes, it happened to me once. I was borrowing money from all the milk bottles on our street. It got so I couldn't sleep

nights worrying about it. Finally, my Pop caught up with me and gave me an awful licking. And was I glad!"

Teacher: "You mean, it was a relief not to have to worry about getting caught?"

Jim: "Yes."

Teacher: "Sometimes we get into things we wish we'd never started. Was that Tommy's trouble?"

Pupils: "Yes."

A Pupil: "But he should have told his Dad. He'd have helped him out."

Teacher: "Why was his father so strict?"

Pupil: "Because he wanted to teach Tommy a lesson from his own experience."

Teacher: "Do you think that a father should help his boy decide what to do with the money he earns?"

This child chose to be direct and frank.

The teacher is careful to be non-critical and casual and to generalize. Any sort of discussion, in a permissive atmosphere, may elicit such admissions of individual behavior. The teacher should safeguard a pupil from any teasing or loss of respect from his peers.

Exploring the attitudes of fathers.

Opening up a new phase of the problem.

This class, because of previous experiences with dramatic play and sociodrama, and because the teacher observed the principles of working with youngsters in a permissive and accepting situation, was very free and spontaneous in expression. The session lasted an hour, and was continued in discussion form the next day, centering around the topic: "Who decides how you can spend money you earn?" The majority of the pupils felt that children need supervision of their spending, *but* that they should be allowed to spend at least half of their earnings.

It is interesting to note that this same story, when used with a ninth grade class, was treated on the basis of: "You have a right to make your own decisions about money which you earn yourself."

PART II

HOW TO GUIDE A ROLE-PLAYING SESSION

A teacher who desires to use role-playing as described in the previous section will want to employ the following steps:*

- *"Warming up" the group.*
- *Selecting the participants.*
- *Preparing the audience to observe alertly.*
- *Role-playing.*
- *Discussing and evaluating.*
- *Re-playing the revised roles.*
- *Sharing experience, and generalizing.*

In this section we will describe each phase in detail.

The warm-up — for awareness and identification.

The "warm-up" serves several very important functions:

It acquaints the participating group with the problem at hand. It arouses awareness of their need to learn ways of dealing with the problem. And it involves the group emotionally in a specific situation, and thereby helps them to identify with individuals coping with the tangle of human relations to which the problem gives rise.

The teacher may begin her warm-up by saying, "I'm sure that every one of you, some time or another, has been

* Adapted from Charles E. Hendry, Ronald Lippitt, and Alvin Zander: "Reality Practice as Educational Method," *Psychodrama Monograph No. 9*, Beacon House, New York, 1947. A fine discussion of role-playing.
Jean D. Grambs, "Dynamics of Psychodrama in the Teaching Situation," *Sociatry*, March, 1945, pp. 393-400. Another helpful reference.

in an embarrassing situation—and believed that a lie was the only way out of it." Or, "How many of you have sometimes felt that your parents were partial to one of your brothers or sisters?" Or, "Sometimes our friends want us to do something that our parents do not permit, and we get into a lot of trouble, trying to please both sides." Or, "You're not invited to a party because you're colored or go to a different church from your classmates."

The teacher's purpose is to get enough response from members of the listening group to make them realize that each of them, that everybody, on occasion, has had to face such problems. And that she is aware that they get into difficulties and is sympathetic and wants to help; that, in fact, many adults are on their side.

The problem under discussion must, of course, be one that is important to them. It must be one which they recognize, one which has baffled them, so that they actually do feel a need to learn how to cope with it.

The next step of the warm-up is to express the general problem in the vivid details of a specific example. Doing that will involve the group emotionally.

An effective tool for this purpose is a story.

Not just any story, but one which presents a problem of human relations in terms which are both believable and interesting. The basic situation of the story must be real and important to the group. The more convincing the story is, the more excitingly it develops, the more strongly will the listeners "identify" with the fictional characters.

The point is that if the pupils feel keenly about the fate of the story characters, they will react keenly afterward. They will participate in role-playing in direct proportion to the degree to which their sympathies and partisanship were aroused, or their convictions were affronted.

The story should be tied into the discussion and the role-playing that will follow.

The teacher may say simply: "I'm going to read you a story about a boy who got into the sort of trouble we're talking about. This story isn't finished. While I'm reading, you may think of how it might end. Perhaps some of you will want to act out ways in which this boy can solve his problem."

This last point is important. It is a challenge to the listening group. Their attention is sharpened. They will listen more alertly. They will identify themselves with various of the story characters and thus get as much meaning as possible out of the situation, so as to be able to deal with it effectively.

After the warm-up story has been read, the teacher helps the group move into discussion and then into role-playing.

Children are a wonderful audience. Less inhibited than grown-ups, they vent their feelings, as they listen, with groans and sighs and comments and handclaps. Even their facial expressions and body postures are eloquent. And after the reading is over, (if the story has been truly meaningful to them) they have much to say and are in a hurry to say it. They are boiling over with responses.

Merely by asking, "Well, how do you think this story will end?" the teacher releases pent-up debate. Suggestions rain at her, often with much heat and emphasis.

Selecting participants for the role-playing. After a short discussion, the teacher asks the class to describe the characters of the story briefly, and to tell how they felt as trouble weighed upon them. Then she asks for volunteers to play these characters' parts in acting out an ending to the story.

Usually several children are quite vocal about what they think will happen and what individual characters will do. In such pupils' expression of ideas the teacher gets clues as to which children are identifying with the various roles and *how* they identify.

She may wish to choose children who indicate an anti-social solution so as to provide opportunity for the exploration of such a solution. Or, she may select a child who will play an authoritarian, or strict middle class mother or father role, knowing that this role typifies a problem faced by many of her young people.

Sometimes the teacher may select a child to play a part because she knows that the child needs to identify with the role, or needs to place himself in another's shoes, as a learning experience.

Primarily, the teacher chooses children who reveal by their remarks that they have identified with certain characters in the story. Usually she avoids choosing, for the first enactment, an individual who will give an adult-oriented, socially-acceptable solution. Using him first may result in the shutting off of exploration of how children actually do think and feel in such situations. Of course, after a thorough investigation of the pupils' honest feelings about the problem, shown by their impulsive actions and their expressions of the values they hold, the teacher may then come back to the child who will give an answer which is mature and acceptable to most adults.

Before beginning the enactment, the actors plan what they are going to do. They do not prepare any dialogue but simply decide, in a general way, on a line of action. The role-playing has most value when completely spontaneous; for that reason, set speeches and detailed plotting are never used.

Preparing the audience to observe the enactment. Before role-playing starts, the teacher prepares the listening group to observe the enactment intelligently—to participate through observation.

One of the important qualities of sociodrama is its power to evoke discussion. The value of this discussion, of course, will depend upon how much meaning the group got

out of watching the role-playing. It is wise, therefore, for the teacher to alert the class to careful observation.

She may remind them that they will have a chance to *re-enact* the sociodrama, to show how *they* think the problem-story should be solved. She may warn them that laughter spoils the exploration. They may have ideas about solutions which they believe are more appropriate than the ending now to be offered.

The enactment. The role-players then put on their enactment. The actual performance may be brief, or quite extended. Length isn't necessarily important. The actors may end the story with a mere question and answer; or they may see so many facets of the problem, and have such mixed feelings about it, that finding a solution is a matter of *working one out* in an emotional conflict of values and ideas.

No actor is expected to present his role flawlessly; mistakes are taken for granted. So are occasional lapses into less than formal language and gesture; too much censorship inhibits spontaneity. The pupils should be helped to understand, too, that the way an actor portrays a role has no reflection upon him as a person. He is simply acting out a characterization as he sees it. He will not be condemned because of his interpretation of the role by the teacher or anyone else. This is very important.

Discussion and evaluation. The next step is that of discussion and evaluation of how well the actors portrayed the roles they assumed, and how well the problem of human relations was solved.

Usually no prompting by the teacher is required. Discussion is fast and furious. The pupils are keyed up. They bubble over with comment. They pour out criticisms on how well the characters were portrayed and how well the idea was dramatized, and offer suggestions on how to solve the problem more adequately.

It is these suggestions for improvement of behavior in the specific situation which are so important.

The role-players, who tried to solve the problem of human relations under attack, are told different and possibly better ways of dealing with the problem. Members of the observing group, too, in this process of evaluation, weigh the merits of a variety of solutions to the difficulty.

The whole group is experiencing, in a very active sense, the stress and exhilaration of problem-solving.

Here, too, the teacher can provide vital guidance, by giving the class the intellectual tools they need. She can help them to familiarize themselves with the steps of problem-solving:

- Defining or redefining the problem.
- Considering alternative courses of action.
- Weighing the consequences of each possible choice.
- Choosing new possibilities on the basis of wider considerations and deeper insights as analysis of the situation proceeds.
- Trying out a choice to test its validity as a solution of the problem.

The re-enactment. Re-enactment is the next step in role-playing. So often, in life, one wishes for a second chance to solve a dilemma. In role-playing, now, this second chance is forthcoming. So is a third and fourth chance. *Facing problems on a practice level, you have all the chances you need.* This is the great value of role-playing. You can arrive at a good solution to a human difficulty through as much trial and error as is necessary.

The actors play their roles over and over again, improving their interpretations in the light of the suggestions they receive.

Or new actors take over the roles to demonstrate alternative solutions.

Sometimes a member of the sociodrama precipitates a situation which leaves another role-player at the end of his ideas. The teacher may then have to (1) guide him indirectly into further action by asking questions, or (2) select another pupil to take this role who seems to have ideas on how to respond to the situation, or (3) cut the scene short and start class discussion.

Re-enactments give opportunity for a helpful variety of approaches to solving the basic problem. New actors may take over the roles and portray them differently. Or the original actors may switch roles (i.e., the "son" of one enactment may play the "father" in a succeeding one) in order to get *inside* roles with which they were in conflict, so as to get a better understanding of other facets in the tangle of human relations, and of other people's feelings in the situation.

A surprising number of episodes may be enacted and re-enacted in a short period of time. It is possible for five or six versions of a situation, with intervening discussion, to take place within an hour.

This moving back and forth from acting to discussing to acting again is a very effective learning sequence. It is much more fruitful than just "talking over" a problem. It is more fruitful than *telling* youngsters to avoid bigotry; more effective than exhortation.

It is far more effective, when trying to help a young person understand how his action may affect another individual, to have him *step into the other's shoes and feel what the other feels,* than simply to tell him, for example, that it is unkind to mock another's religion or race or other difference.

Sharing experience and generalizing. The last step in role-playing may be termed a period of sharing experience and generalizing from it.

The teacher may ask the group: "Do you know anyone to whom this kind of thing has happened?"

Usually individuals will volunteer to tell of incidents similar to that in the problem-story.

This sharing of experience, this exploration of the consequences of behavior, achieves several important purposes.

It helps anxious young people to discover that the troubles affecting them occur to other people, too. To *many* other people. In this awareness a worried individual finds relief and reassurance.

In addition, young people acquire attitudes and values which condition their daily behavior.

Out of the enactments, out of the criticisms and suggestions and re-enactments, out of the excited clash of opinion, the group hammers out general principles of conduct. In this period, now, of sharing and generalizations, these principles will find expression. They will be especially important to the individual pupil because they bear the authority of his own peers.

Permissiveness and spontaneity. In a role-playing session the teacher is permissive. Exactly what does this term mean?

For years we teachers have insisted that classroom behavior be "nice," restrained, and "socially acceptable." If we are to work with the feelings of children, we shall have to develop an atmosphere in which children are permitted to express their feelings honestly, which often means that they will be less than "nice."

Of course, in a classroom situation there are necessary limits placed upon expression of feelings. Children cannot conduct themselves with the almost complete freedom allowed them in a play-therapy room. But the teacher can help a child by recognizing his feelings, then channeling expression of them through various media—role-playing, dramatic play, painting, clay, rhythms, etc.

An important technique for helping the child explore his feelings is the method of reflecting them back to him.

This is based upon the non-directive counseling procedure which has been developed by Carl R. Rogers.

The teacher can help a young person by telling him, when he's upset, "You're angry." He responds, "Yes, I am. They won't let me play with them!" In this process the teacher shows the child that she knows how he feels, she sympathizes with him, she *feels with him,* and helps him to explore and clarify his trouble.

In brief, the teacher establishes a warm, friendly relationship with children. She accepts them as they are. They soon learn that they can express their emotions to her without condemnation, and will get help, assistance and support. She maintains a deep and real respect for children's ability to solve their own problems if given a chance to do so. The responsibility to make choices and to institute change is the child's.

It is only as each child gains insight into his life situations and accepts certain solutions as wise for him, that he will modify his behavior in increasingly mature patterns.

The permissive atmosphere makes spontaneity possible.

Spontaneity is necessary in role-playing. That is why, when planning the enactment, the actors do *not* work out details of dialogue and action. A detailed plot would be a cage or harness inhibiting the emotional identification of the players with the roles they are assuming. The actors, therefore, merely decide upon a general direction in which to move—and their speech and actions are improvised as they go along, and are consequently honest in impulse and natural.

Group approval or disapproval is still apt to operate, even in a role-playing situation. Here, as elsewhere, some individuals are likely to go along with the crowd. In the discussion, if consensus seems to lean toward a particular solution of a problem, some members of the class will appear

to accept that solution, though, to their own minds, it is not good.

The sensitive teacher is alert to guard against mere conformity. She will emphasize that open-minded evaluation of conduct in the light of consequences is the group goal. She will give dissenters support in thinking through alternatives.

The audience, too, is learning. Only a few members of the class play roles at one time, of course; but the audience, as well as the participants, is going through a learning process. For that matter, so is the teacher.

In role-playing, an individual is keyed up to see his own behavior in a role. The result is that his susceptibility to learning is at a maximum.

It is important for the teacher to help the class understand that role-playing is a shared experience for further learning in which every member of the group may take turns at enacting a role, and in which *it is not the individual who is being evaluated but only the part which he is assuming*. The way an actor portrays a role has no reflection upon him as a person. He is not going to be condemned as an individual, and is not going to condemn the next person playing the role as an individual.

In consequence, the ego does not raise impassable barriers against criticism, against insights leading to change of behavior.

This attitude is coupled with another factor: each participant is a member of the observing audience until he, too, takes part in an enactment; he is geared up to evaluating the acting that goes on because he may be the next one to act. He is, therefore, in a mood of open-minded self-awareness. He is receptive to suggestions for improvement.

This is a very promising state of feeling for character development. For it is especially in the area of human rela-

tions that it is difficult to bring people to new ways of behaving.

Role-playing is sometimes termed "reality practice" or "reality testing." This is what it often is: practice in living.

> "In real life, there is no chance to retreat once one has made a decision, or said the particular words. If what has been said or done is inappropriate, it is too bad; in such situations most people have evolved defense mechanisms which are only rarely adequate. Role-playing is remarkably useful in preparing such persons to handle personal problems *by allowing them to explore on the play level* some more appropriate ways of dealing with other individuals. There is no grave penalty for failure; in fact, failure is expected and accepted. . . . The most carefully analyzed generalizations can never provide this facsimile of real life. . . . Role-playing is one way of releasing the person a little so that he can explore in an unusually permissive atmosphere some new and better patterns of behavior."*

If the observers shared during the warm-up discussion in defining the problem and the human relations involved, they have a proprietary interest in the sociodrama. If, moreover, the whole group cooperated in deciding what the characters of the drama were like, the audience's identification with the roles is keener still. The audience is thus exploring "live" facsimiles of conduct.

Even the teacher learns. The teacher can learn much, in the enactment, about the personality of her pupils. It is valuable, for example, for her to notice how an individual brings other people into the dramatization; whether he is able to remain sensitive to the feelings and behavior of other actors, or whether his responses are determined by his own needs only.

The teacher can observe, over a period of time, which roles pupils readily accept and which types of parts they feel resistant toward enacting. Resistance can show itself in a number of ways: an actor laughs and looks at the

* Jean D. Grambs, "Dynamics of Psychodrama in the Teaching Situation," *Sociatry*, March, 1948, pp. 393-400.

audience; he breaks out of character and asks for further instruction; he burlesques his part; or simply stops and says that he cannot play it.

Some don'ts for role-playing. For a long time teachers have operated on the theory that only socially acceptable behavior can be permitted in the classroom. The result is that certain predispositions exist.

We tend to explore until we find the child who has the "right" answer, then we call on him to present the final and authoritative word to the class. *Don't!* This shuts off real feeling and thinking and deprives the teacher of the knowledge of how her pupils *actually do* solve their problems. We cannot guide toward socially acceptable solutions to child problems unless we know how children behave and can help them to examine the consequences of that behavior.

We talk too much.

Teachers are so eager to have children come to proper conclusions that they tend to "put the words in the children's mouths." *Don't!*

The only generalizations that will actually modify behavior are those that come from insight—from a discovery of relationships. Be patient; wait. Insight may come to your young people tomorrow, or maybe not until many of them have gone on into another class. Sometimes we must be content merely to start a process of feeling and thinking.

In our concern to get the outcomes we have in mind, we teachers often "set the stage" so rigidly that there is only one path for thinking to follow.

For example, it is a mistake to talk too long about the significance of a problem in the story (the warm-up), in order to get intellectual verbalizations about it. Again — *don't.* For if you do, children begin to deliberate on what the adults are wanting of them. They explore action on a verbal level (trying out the teacher) and then in the enact-

ments they give back adult solutions to the story problem. If our purpose is *to explore the impulsive behavior of children,* then let's *act* (role-play) first, and *think* afterward (discuss and evaluate). We do, of course, want to help children to "think" first, then *act on thinking.* But that will come later, as a result of exploring with them their impulsive action and helping them to see what "thinking first" may offer.

Tact. Tact is an important attribute of the person directing role-playing. Young people of minority groups are especially sensitive — though they may mask it very well — to comments about their characteristics. Teachers need to plan carefully for these children.

If it is a different sort of problem, such as that of honesty, and one of the students in the room has been questioned on suspicion of looting lockers, obviously it is necessary to safeguard him from being openly talked about and condemned. The problem should be examined in terms that remove it from the immediate situation. In fact, it may be wise to postpone such a discussion until the actual incident has been largely forgotten.

Another risk is that of self-exposure.

In any group enterprise of this sort—in dramatic play, in sociodrama, even in mere discussion—it may happen that an individual will expose himself to ridicule or rejection by being too frank about himself. In the heat of argument, when a permissive atmosphere has been established, a young person may reveal some past behavior which will hurt his status among his peers. The alert teacher will try to play down such revelations. In starting discussion, it is wise to ask, "Do you know anyone to whom this sort of thing has happened?" This is a wiser device than asking, "Has this sort of thing ever happened to you?"

Also, the careful teacher will not push a student to elaborate upon a comment when to do so may cause him to betray that the example he's telling about is himself. When

the teacher senses resistance, she should move on to another student or topic in a casual manner so that no attention is drawn to the pupil's retreat from self-exposure.

Possible guilt feelings. Sometimes the discussion may tend to arouse guilt feelings among members of the role-playing group. The problem being worked on may be, for example, that of lying to parents in order to hide activity which has not been permitted. So often a youngster will go to a movie, buy a toy, or indulge in other activities which parents have prohibited — then cover up by lying. Such lying may be attacked by some members of the class. It is the teacher's responsibility, then, to give the group healthier perspectives upon the matter. She needs to help the group to understand that, at one time or another, every one of us has succumbed to temptation of some sort. She needs to emphasize that what is important is to grow in understanding and self-respect and responsibility, so that one uses increasingly *better* judgment both as to choice of behavior and as to the ways of handling the consequences of that behavior.

By so guiding the situation, the teacher can replace guilt feelings with reassurance. Here, in discussion (as so often happens in the role-playing itself) an important relief of tensions is provided.

A safeguard against damage to an individual's self-esteem lies in the fact that role-playing is, in a sense, self-limiting. If discussion cuts into painful areas, the group will shrink away defensively, closing up in self-protection, and the session will come to a halt.

PART III

THE PROBLEM STORY

A well-told and well-rounded narrative seems to provide the most evocative impetus for either discussion or sociodrama. The term "reaction story" is often used when a narrative is utilized as a springboard to discussion. The term "problem story" has come into use when referring to a special type of narrative prepared as a method for catapulting a group into role-playing. (The problem story has also been called "crisis story" and "open-ended story.")

Characteristics of the problem story. The problem story has some definite and necessary characteristics.

- It is intended to be read aloud to a group, and should be written for easy reading.
- Reading time should run from ten to twenty minutes; even longer stories, however, can be effective.
- Each story is based upon a developmental task of the age of the group for which it is planned.
  The story is not finished; it comes to a stop at the highest possible peak of intensity in the form of a dilemma which presents various alternatives for action. This is a crucial element of the story. Impetus for discussion must lie in the various choices of possible behavior for solving the problem of human relations basic to the story.
- The story must be effective as drama. That is, it must create an illusion which catches and holds the audience's interest intensely. Every possible dramatic device of humor, irony and surprise should be used to make the story a worthwhile aesthetic experience.
- The story must have complete conviction for the audience for which it is intended. Tone, vocabulary, and the issues involved must be realistic, to achieve the deeply felt "identification" of audience with

story characters that is so necessary as impetus for whole-hearted role-playing.

The concept of developmental tasks.

A problem story must rise to a high peak of intensity in a dilemma *which poses alternatives for action.* This dilemma gives the story focus. Everything that has happened in the story has been an intensification for this climax. The story stops—but the listeners go on.

Of course, the basic problem of the story must be very meaningful to the group or the whole procedure will lack conviction and will fail.

A problem is meaningful to the group when it is one which practically every member has had to face.

Developmental tasks are the actual and serious problems which all young people have to solve as they mature.

Exactly what are "developmental tasks?"

As a child grows, he learns increasingly to adapt himself to the situations and individuals with whom he must live. He acquires, in varying measure, skills for human relations and attitudes toward institutions. Sometimes he makes such growth easily, sometimes with difficulty. But he must make these step-by-step adaptations to society or become a maladjusted person.

In every area and aspect of human relations, the child faces the task of learning what sort of behavior is approved and what is frowned upon. It is no mere theoretical matter, either; punishment for failure is very real and immediate—in ridicule by his peers or rejection by his adults. Each such task is termed "developmental" because it is a crucial step in his growth as a person. In fact, his growth is often appraised in terms of how well he has achieved these tasks.

Consider how fondly parents smile on a 10-year-old who runs errands promptly, who succors siblings from traf-

fic, who can heed as well as read time, who knows that closet hooks are to hold clothes and not BB guns or experiments in taxidermy, who starts his home work right after dinner and not precisely at bed time. Such a 10-year-old has learned to get along with adults and has acquired conscience and responsibility. However, it is also necessary for him to acquire the values honored by his peers, and to achieve status among them. If he has learned to share windfalls of candy and ice-cream, if he has gained the ability to swim well and pitch a ball hard, if he has collected an arsenal of deft wisecracks, if he can show reckless courage at times and sly stealth at others, if he conforms slavishly to items of dress and haircut as approved by his gang, he has learned to fit comfortably into the customs of his contemporaries.

If, in addition, he has ceased mourning over the fact that his hair is carrotty and his ears like radar antennae and that he is skinny and must wear glasses to correct a squint, if he has accepted what he is and must be physically, and if he has learned to take pride in the fact that at least he can run faster than his friends and can build a model plane that will fly a mile a minute, he is accomplishing the difficult and vital developmental task of self-acceptance.

Self-respect, responsibility, skill in getting along with adults, status among peers—these are a few of the most crucial developmental tasks which all young people face at different stages of growing up.

To grasp the concept of developmental tasks is to obtain a key to understanding much of children's behavior at their various stages of growing up.

The young child, the pre-adolescent, the adolescent and the late adolescent each has a different range of developmental tasks to accomplish.

The point to be made here is this: *Each problem story intended for use as a warm-up to role-playing must deal dramatically with a developmental task of the age for which*

the story is intended. Only then will it have real meaning and importance for the group working to solve its dilemmas. Listed below are a very few of the typical developmental tasks that have been identified for various age levels.

DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS

Primary Grades: ages 5-8

Learning to adjust to the larger play group of the school.

Understanding the role of the teacher; sharing an adult with many other children.

Learning to share toys and materials.

Learning to take one's turn and to wait.

Learning that other people can do things differently and still be all right.

Learning to relate oneself emotionally to others outside the family group.

Middle Grades: ages 9-11

Exploring a wider world.

Acquiring a basic sense of what is right and wrong.

Learning how to approach strangers and new social situations.

Seeing family and social group in relation to others in the community.

Exploring new emotions; friendship, affection for others, leaving home, death, separation.

Early Adolescence: ages 12-14

Adjusting to changing body.

Recognizing the new definition of boy-girl relations.

Learning about one's growth pattern and accepting any personal deviation from the ideal type.

Moving from neighborhood gang to friendship group based on mutual interests.

Learning the social definitions of who may or may not be potential friends.

Being able to balance adequately the demands of parents and the pressures of the peer group.

Late Adolescence: ages 15-18

Learning skills in boy-girl relationships in social situations.

Learning which group values to accept and which to reject.

Learning the social hierarchy of the community: who "rates" and who does not.

Developing a social conscience; an awareness of the needs and problems of others.

Finding ways of being successful that are personally satisfying and socially acceptable.

Acquiring a clear concept of social role and social status of own family and group.

Learning what rules of social conduct and personal behavior apply in what situation.*

The following problem story outlines are presented here to illustrate how *developmental tasks* can be used as bases for such stories.**

1. The Blind Fish. Developmental task: *respect for authority.* Children growing up in a society have to learn to curb many of their personal desires and impulses because of the regulations necessary to successful group life.

The basic situation of this story is that of a boy who does not obey rules set down for the welfare of his whole group. A dozen boys at camp go out on a hike with a counselor. They explore a big cave. The counselor lays down some rules for their safety: they must stick together and follow him closely, for if anyone got separated from the group in this underground

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* Robert J. Havighurst, *Development Tasks and Education,* Longmans, Green and Company, 1950.

F. Stratemeyer, *et al, A Curriculum for Modern Living,* Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia Univ.; *Fostering Mental Health,* 1950 Yearbook, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Washington, D.C., 1950.

N.B.: It is important to note that developmental tasks will vary for children of the same age levels, depending upon the sub-culture, ethnic group, social class, etc., in which the child is growing up.

** Written by George Shaftel for the School of Education, Stanford University.

maze, he might be lost for days. There is danger, too, of falling off ledges and sliding into pits. The hikers pass an underground pool. One boy induces another to lag behind with him. They wade into the water and their lights disclose fish in the clear pond. They catch some and discover that the fish are blind, and grow excited over their unique find. Then one boy steps into a deep hole and goes under water. He cannot swim and would have drowned if the other boy had not been along to save him. Even the good swimmer, however, gets a cramp in the cold water and barely manages to reach the bank. The crowd returns. Hearing about the blind fish, they all want to catch some. The counselor refuses to permit it. They clamor that he's not fair; the first two boys had caught some of the fish. So why can't they all?

2. Party Dress. Developmental task: *outgrowing sibling rivalry, learning to share affection.*

In this story, the basic situation is that of rivalry between sisters which is intensified by partiality shown one girl by the parents. The younger sister is invited to a party, and asks her mother for a new dress. The mother refuses to spend money for it. The older daughter is invited out—and the mother does buy her a new party dress. The younger girl is outraged; and, in her anger, accidentally ruins the dress. The mother tries to explain why she had apparently been partial to the older daughter; she has a good reason for buying the dress. But the younger child is too hurt and angry to listen.

3. The Squawk Box. Developmental task: *winning friends, gaining status, among peers.*

This story concerns a boy who is different from his playmates: in dress, in manners, in athletic abilities. Other children consider him queer. Lacking the abilities which his age-mates respect, he is rejected and left on the fringe of their play. And when he does demonstrate that he has a fine ability in one area — handling a public address system—he is not given the recognition he deserves; instead, a popular boy, who is not as able as he is, wins the coveted job.

4. Boy and Girl. Developmental task: *learning to be fair with others.*

It is a stereotype in our culture that a boy must be a gentleman and be polite, considerate, generous and self-denying in his relations with a girl. This is an adult idea of chivalry. And sometimes a girl will take advantage of it and impose upon a boy. In this story, youngsters at a party embark upon a scavenger hunt. A boy finds a key item on the list, which will insure his winning the prize—but a girl snatches at the item and claims that she saw it first; and when the boy tries to hang on to his possession he is accused by adults of lacking good manners.

5. Lost Ball. Developmental task: *learning to be honest; to preserve integrity in human relationships.*

An eleven-year-old, whose parents are very strict, gets bored with staying in his own yard. He starts playing Andy-Over with a neighbor boy. They stand on opposite sides of the house and toss a ball over the roof to each other. The ball tears through the soft top of the family car, parked out in front on the steep street. Recovering the ball, the boys loosen the emergency brake and the car starts to roll. To stop it, they twist the steering wheel, and the car jumps the curb and crashes into a tree. That night, when the eleven-year-old's father asks him what happened, he is so frightened that he lies and blames the neighbor boy. His father marches him straight over to the neighbor's house—to tell the other boy's father. The other boy, of course, glares in outrage and disgust when accused, and angrily charges the first youngster with lying. The fathers say they're going to get the real truth out of the youngsters.

Obviously, in addition to the significance of the developmental task presented in the problem story, the quality of a role-playing session will to a large extent depend upon how well written the problem story is, and how meaningful its content is to its audience.

Where can the classroom teacher obtain problem stories for use with her group? Stories are included in some

of the books on role-playing listed in the bibliography. The teacher herself can prepare some stories and she can have her students write some out of their own experiences.

PART IV

ROLE-PLAYING AND ITS PLACE IN THE CURRICULUM

Increasingly, in curriculum planning, we are becoming concerned with analyzing educational experiences for their effect upon behavior. We are saying that *learning is changed behavior.* And we are concerned to help children and youth develop behavior consonant with democratic human relations.

How does democracy get into personality?

How do we modify the feeling, doing, thinking processes of young people so that they live well with themselves and with others?

This problem merits a multiple approach. A curriculum program designed to serve the purposes of better human relations and of intergroup education must be concerned with interpersonal problems, social problems and intergroup problems.

A child who is tied up in knots because of unsolved emotional problems—conflicts with parents or siblings, inability to get along with age-mates, etc.—is in no state to identify with intergroup dilemmas; he is too busy trying to live with and resolve his immediate personal difficulties. He needs to be helped to understand his crucial life-situations, to see that he is not alone in his problems. The school, by providing in the curriculum opportunity for such exploration, *with the support and opposition of his age-mates,* (that is, through group processes such as role-playing) can help children to learn to face and accept social realities.

Social problems, appropriate to the maturity and life experiences of the children involved, are also a part of this multiple approach. Individual problems need to be seen as a part of larger social settings. For example, a child who feels imposed upon by his mother's continual demands that he care for a younger brother can be helped to understand the pressures upon the mother in the small family which no longer includes a grandmother or maiden aunt to relieve a busy parent.

Only after children and youth have learned to meet with some adequacy their own interpersonal problems are they ready to identify with, and attempt to resolve, those problems in intergroup education which are not directly pertinent to their immediate life situations. Sometimes children will need to have experienced how it feels to be different (to have red hair, wear glasses, or limp, for example) before they can explore how it feels to be Jewish or Negro or of a minority ethnic group.

Therefore a truly comprehensive program in intergroup education must be built upon a broad base, including interpersonal and social problems.

Children need curricular experiences which help them to understand that all behavior is caused.

Role-playing can be an excellent tool for exploring the causes of behavior. It can be incorporated into any phase of the school program when appropriate.

For example, a discussion in social studies on the plight of displaced persons can lead to role-playing the difficulties which such people encounter when coming to a new land. Or the mistreatment of a child new to the school can be the opportunity for using a problem story based on discrimination and working out a solution to it. Role-playing can become an everyday tool for stimulating, exploring and refining experience. Role-playing can provide, in the classroom, *practice* in the real-life necessity of facing crises and

dilemmas and dealing with them with the effective tools of problem-solving procedures. Role-playing can serve many purposes in the curriculum. In social studies children can role-play a wide variety of situations, such as:

- How it feels to be the *little*, then *big* brother, when the new baby is brought home.
- How it felt to have to choose sides in the American Revolution; exploring a family's doubts and concerns in Boston during the Boston Tea Party.
- How it felt to be told you were free, when you had always been a slave; exploring the dilemmas that faced the freed families after the Civil War.
- How it feels to be a member of another culture—Japanese, French, English, Mexican, Indian, etc.
- How it feels to be new to a community.
- How it feels to be a member of a city council.
- How it feels to be a Catholic, a Jew, or a member of another religion faced with prejudice.

Or, in the daily routine of school life, the teacher may use the many dilemmas of ordinary events to explain feelings and seek solutions in such situations as:

- A school yard fight: using observers to role-play what they saw and how they interpreted the issues, as well as giving those involved an opportunity to express their feelings.
- A community situation in which there is controversy over policy: such as the use of recreational facilities, or the maintenance of restrictive covenants.
- A club program: how it feels to be excluded.

In the language arts program there are many golden opportunities to role-play situations presented in books, in order to consider other ways in which people might resolve the life situations described.

Sometimes the teacher may bring in problems for role-playing which some children are actually facing in real life. Sometimes a film can be used instead of a problem-story; sometimes pupils can create their own narratives.

Role-playing and intergroup education. Curriculum can be planned to provide a program in intergroup education.

It is true, of course, that younger children who have never met discrimination may be merely puzzled by such problems when they are presented in direct fashion. However, they will understand problems having to do with belonging, acceptance and rejection, with authority; and dealing with such life-situations is preparation for intergroup education. In fact, such a program becomes an important aspect of mental health education. In the process of learning to understand others, one learns to understand oneself.

An intergroup education program should develop such attitudes as:

- *concern about inequalities,*
- *understanding that people are what they are because of their experiences,*
- *awareness of patterns of behavior,*
- *acceptance of duties as citizens,*
- *attitudes of respect for cultures, religions, institutions of others,*
- *knowledge that members of a group are interdependent,*
- *the value of making social contacts with many different peoples,*
- *the need to control and get rid of tensions that arise from feelings of superiority and inferiority.*
- *the need to be aware of responsibilities,*
- *the need to learn to appraise one's own potentialities.*

Role-playing can be used as an important tool for realizing these purposes. As problems in human relations arise in school, the teacher can open them up and extend them into major areas of the curriculum.

For example, a refugee child from Europe may be mocked and teased on the playground because he wears

"queer" clothes and pronounces English "comically" and is "dumb" about the most ordinary things like baseball and television and how to drive a car or play marbles. By helping the children to identify with this youngster, to step into his shoes in a role-playing session, the teacher can work toward building attitudes of respect for other cultures, for understanding that people are what they are because of their past experiences, that many different ways of behaving are acceptable. She can work toward these objectives through the social studies, through the examination of how people live in other parts of the world and how climate and land and resources and history give them customs which are different from our own but just as worthy of respect.

Intergroup tensions of varying degree exist in all American communities. Defense industries have been magnets drawing many thousands of workers from farms to factories, from the South and Middlewest to the Pacific Coast and the North, from low-paid jobs to highly-paid ones in shipyards and laboratories. In the last ten years we have had a variety of migratory movements of population. Wherever new people have come into old communities, problems have arisen. Lack of housing has been one difficulty. Differences in speech and manners and dress and standards of conduct have caused others. Differences in color and religion have been sources of serious conflict, misunderstanding and tension.

The school can help to ease such tensions by studying its own community, by examining the background of historical and social forces which have brought tensions into existence, by applying techniques of promise, such as role-playing, to the development of intergroup insights and understanding.

It has become recognized that in working for intergroup harmony it isn't enough merely to stop a fight between a Johnny Smith and a Pedro Ramirez. When a Sheriff disperses a mob throwing rocks at a home newly purchased by a Chinese war veteran, the officer is merely suppressing hostility, not eradicating it. Such hostility can

flare up later. *A vital job in intergroup education is to permit the development of personalities in which hostility and aggressions are not accumulated to be vented against scapegoats.* A task of intergroup education is to help young people grow up into adults who have too much insight, who are too well educated, to harbor prejudice against other people for such reasons as differences of color or religion or social class. To this end, role-playing of problem stories of children's own life situations can be a most effective tool.

PART V

STORIES IN INTERGROUP RELATIONS

Problem stories about intergroup relations have been used in a variety of classrooms, with no difficulty arising out of their use. Stories have been presented in situations in which the school people involved felt that it was wise to use them; their use was geared to the needs and readiness of the situation.

Such sessions have revealed so many further needs, and have been so heartening in results, that they serve as encouragement for further work with intercultural materials.

The story *No Trespassing* which follows here was used, for example, in two neighboring middle class communities. One 6th grade teacher had a program of intergroup education as part of her over-all curriculum. Her pupils solved the problem of *No Trespassing* by trying *to get the club rules changed* so that discrimination on the basis of prejudice could be eliminated.

A neighboring 7th grade teacher's pupils met an intergroup problem for the first time with the presentation of this story to them. They proposed that the Jewish boy involved escape being excluded because of prejudice *by changing his name.* The teacher in this case was so disturbed by the experience that she reported it to faculty meeting and the teachers of the school decided that the school needed a continuing program in intergroup education.

The following pages present a treatment of the problem story *No Trespassing,* and the story itself, as an example of one way role-playing a problem story may be useful in dealing with intergroup relations.

ROLE-PLAYING AN INTERGROUP PROBLEM STORY:

No Trespassing

Introduction and suggestions for use of the story. The story in this case typifies a classic problem in human relations: exclusion because of race, creed or nationality.

Syd, a Jewish boy, is discriminated against on the basis of prejudice. The adult in the situation accepts the concept of exclusion and tries to offer a different reward to Syd than is offered to his two friends. In this story children are confronted with the fact that in our society people are sometimes excluded from places because of prejudice. The class is involved in making a choice between (1) accepting discrimination or (2) taking action against it.

Most children show no tendencies to discriminate against others for the usual social reasons until the adult culture influences them by example or pressure. However, by the time children are ten years old, most reflect the social patterns of discrimination of their family and class and community.

In this story, a child is discriminated against on a basis of prejudice. This is an account of anti-Semitism; but it could also represent anti-Negro bias, anti-Italian or anti-Catholic bias, or any anti-foreigner bigotry.

Educators are more and more aware of the importance of good intergroup relations in the development of democratic personalities. Not only was our nation developed through an ideal of equal opportunity for all, but its very future depends upon the attitudes its citizens hold toward the people of the world. Teachers today are deeply concerned with the guiding of children in growth of attitudes of sympathy, appreciation and acceptance of all people, regardless of race, creed or color.

The basic teaching objective of this story and its use to stimulate role-playing is to help children explore the fact

that prejudice and discrimination do operate in our culture and to consider rationally the reasons for and the effect of prejudice, within the limits of their maturity.

It is the teacher's role not to condemn but to help children see that all people have some prejudices, to examine the reasons for them and to explore the effect of prejudice upon human beings. The teacher may guide the class toward consideration of such concepts as:

- *People often have mistaken notions about other people because they look or speak differently or have strange customs.*
- *Sometimes we jump to conclusions about all the people of a group because one of that group does something that offends us.*
- *All people have the same feelings and needs.*

It is difficult to discuss this story in terms of "typical" classroom responses because children's attitudes vary with that of the community they live in and their family backgrounds. Some children accept the situation in this story; but, because they like the hero, Syd, they try to figure out a way of making an exception of him. Other children are indignant at the discrimination and try to get the rules changed. Some children are completely innocent of prejudice, and for them this story presents an entirely new learning situation.

Even though some children have had no experience with racial or religious discrimination, they are quick to understand the concept of discrimination when it is described in terms of their own environment—the girl who invites some girls to a party and excludes others, the boy who is left out of social plans because of his ragged appearance, etc.

No Trespassing involves such a controversial problem of our American scene that it is not possible to make simple and positive suggestions for treating it. You will have to estimate the meaning this story has for your pupils and your community. If you teach in an eastern city which has

a large Jewish population, this problem may be a real and bitter one for some of your children. In some communities in the Middle West there may be no incidents of anti-Semitism in the experience of your pupils.

One of your difficulties will be not to embarrass a Jewish child in your class, not to isolate him through this role-playing session. If there are only one or two such children in your group, it may be wise to change the nationality or religion of Syd in order to impersonalize the issue. However, if there are a sizable number of Jewish children in your class, they already have a problem, and a sympathetic, honest approach through this story may help them to accept themselves, and may help the rest of the group to consider the consequences of discrimination.

Important to your success with this story is the task of setting the problem so that children can see that people discriminate against others for various reasons, none of which is entirely rational.

A good way to introduce this story would be to recall to the class some example of discrimination that is common to their experience. Then the teacher may go on to say, "I have a story about a boy who was left out of a wonderful vacation for reasons that had nothing to do with him personally. I wonder what you would have done if this happened to you? When this story stops, perhaps you can finish it."

The teacher should read the story carefully beforehand, and should make notes on problem relations which might be explored through role-playing. For example, in this story, the teacher may wish to guide the children to:

- Finish the story in action. This may take the form of:
  a. Getting the rule against Jewish boys changed.
  b. Exploring why the rule was made and by whom.
  c. Deciding not to go to the camp but to accept the bicycles instead.
  d. Getting an exception to the rule for Syd.

e. Other solutions.

The consequences of each solution should be explored — how each person feels about the matter; how it affects his life.

- Switch roles, if appropriate, so that a child who is expressing prejudice may be placed in Syd's role.
- Consider the general problem of prejudice and open up the need for further information and study.
- Follow up the story with intercultural materials—films, books, recordings, etc.

Exploring the personal experiences of your class. If a warm and sympathetic climate for support of minority groups develops in the class, it may be possible for the teacher to ask, "Did anything like this ever happen to you?" It may be wise, however, to begin on a less personal level with "Do you know of a situation where someone was treated like Syd?"

As the children share experiences the teacher can guide their thinking by asking:

- How was the problem resolved?
- How did the people involved feel about it?
- How do you think the problem should have been solved?

It may be profitable to ask various members of the class how they would have acted if they had been in the situation described.

THE PROBLEM STORY "NO TRESPASSING" *
(Condensed version)

Syd, Eddie and Joe — eleven-year-olds — were hiking across the countryside when they came to a fence bearing this sign:

PRIVATE PROPERTY

Summer Camp
GRAY HAWK MILITARY SCHOOL

Trespassers will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

It did not stop the boys. They crawled under the wire and went exploring, and were much impressed by the activity they saw.

Boys in natty uniforms.

Boys doing stunts on horseback.

Boys playing tennis, handball, baseball.

Boys in motorboats on the lake, water-skiing.

Syd was frankly envious. Eddie was impressed but silent. Joe sneered, belittling the "fancypants kids" whose "pops had money to spend" sending them to such an expensive summer camp.

Eddie led on. They stole like Indians on the warpath through the shrubbery and across the spacious grounds, watching the fun the uniformed boys were having, and growing ever more envious.

A runaway horse plunging through the brush almost trampled on them. They stopped the animal, and noticed that it was saddled and that a rein was broken. Obviously, the horse had thrown a rider.

Backtracking, they found a uniformed boy lying senseless on the ground, a leg broken and a bleeding wound in his head where he had struck a rock. It was getting dark, now, and they realized that the boy might lie here all night, losing blood, if they left him.

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* By George Shaftel.

They made a litter and started carrying him. It seemed as if he grew heavier with every step, but they managed to get him out to the road. And then a police car stopped and shone a light on them as they climbed under the fence and a tough voice demanded to know if they could read the "No Trespassing" signs.

Syd and Joe fled. Eddie stayed by the senseless boy.

The police car rushed Eddie and the hurt boy into town . . . .

It was next evening that Eddie's father answered the door bell after supper, and saw a big, grayhaired man waiting there.

"My name's Nichols. I'm looking for Eddie Malloy."

"He's here. Come in, won't you?" I'm Eddie's father."

Eddie, doing his homework beside the radio in the livingroom, became afraid. They were looking for him!

"What did you want to see Eddie about?" his father asked.

"Why, last night, the police picked up a boy named Eddie Malloy. They saw him coming from the grounds of the Gray Hawk Military Academy. He had another boy with him who was hurt, and the police took the injured lad to the hospital. While they were carrying him inside, Eddie ran away."

And now they've come after me, Eddie realized. In his mind was that sign on the Gray Hawk fence: *Trespassers will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.* Eddie began to shake.

"The policemen knew his name," the man went on, "because they had questioned him while driving to the hospital. He told them two other boys had been on the school grounds with him. I'm looking for them, too. Your boy wouldn't give their names to the policemen."

"Oh, he wouldn't?" Eddie's Dad said. He didn't sound angry, exactly, more like he was proud, or something.

"I want to find all three of them," Mr. Nichols went on. And *his* voice had an odd, shaky unevenness in it. "You see, my boy Philip is a student at Gray Hawk. He — my wife died five years ago. Philip likes horses. He's a great little rider. Well, yesterday, he says, he was riding this new

horse, Chappo, down through the brush, and a quail flying up suddenly scared Chappo into bucking, and a rein broke, and Phil got thrown. He doesn't remember much after that, but the doctor says the horse must have kicked him in the head."

"Good Lord!" Eddie's Dad said. "That's awful"

"Yes, I —" Mr. Nichols coughed kind of hard, and didn't finish.

"How is the boy?"

"Why, he's doing very well, really. I — we're lucky, no getting around it. The doctor thought at first it might be a fracture, but now he's decided it's just concussion. But, Mr. Malloy, if Philip hadn't been found, he'd have lain out there all night and likely — well, if your son and his friends hadn't carried him out to the highway, he'd be dead now."

"Oh, now, I don't think —."

"That's exactly what the doctor says." Mr. Nichols' voice was getting kind of loud. He shut up abruptly, as if realizing it. "My boy means an awful lot to me —."

"Of course."

"I — I'm not really a wealthy man, Mr. Malloy. I keep Philip in Gray Hawk because he has such a swell time there, and I can afford it. Now, I can't just say thanks to your son and his two friends. I want to show just a little bit of how I feel toward them. I'd like to *do* something for them."

"Oh, that's not necessary at all, Mr. Nichols!"

"Yes, it is, sir. For me. Now, I had this idea. Tell me what you think of it. It's summer time, it's vacation time — and your lad and his two chums were trespassing on the Gray Hawk summer camp. I don't blame 'em for that. It's a wonderful place. What I'd like to do, sir — I'd like for Eddie and his two friends to become members of Gray Hawk for two weeks. To spend two weeks up there as my guests, swimming and riding and having all that fun. What do you think of that idea, Mr. Malloy?"

Eddie's Dad's voice was soft as he said, "Mr. Nichols, I think those boys would love it. But suppose we ask them?" And Mr. Malloy called, "Oh, Eddie! Come here!"

Eddie came in. And one look at his excited face told his Dad and Mr. Nichols that he had overheard.

"You'd like to go, wouldn't you, Eddie?" his Dad said.

"I would, Dad, I sure would!"

"How about Joe and Syd?"

"Can I go call 'em, Pop?"

Mr. Malloy nodded, and Eddie shot out of the house. Syd lived next door, and Joe lived across the street. A few minutes later Eddie was back, bringing Joe and Syd.

Mr. Nichols smiled at them.

"It's true, boys. Would you all like to spend two weeks at the Gray Hawk Camp?"

"Gosh, yes!" Joe almost yelled; and Syd said breathlessly, "Yes, sir!"

"All right, then, it's settled! I'll telephone Major Arnott in the morning, and at two o'clock tomorrow afternoon I'll come for you, and I'll take you there. I'll have to give Arnott your names and addresses." He took a pencil from his pocket, and opened his wallet to write in it. "Eddie Malloy. . . .

"Joe Harris . . . and Syd — Is that Sydney?"

"Yes sir, Sydney Goldberg."

"Sydney Gold — oh. G-o-l-d-b-e-r-g?"

"Yes, sir!"

Very slowly, Mr. Nichols wrote the name out, letter by letter. His face had got very red, and his forehead was sweaty, as if the room had suddenly become very hot. After finishing Syd's name, he stared at the paper, frowning, as if trying hard to see something that had become very dim.

"I'll call Major Arnott first thing in the morning," he repeated, almost as if talking to himself. He glanced at Mr. Malloy suddenly, an odd, baffled, worried look in his eyes, almost as if he were asking Mr. Malloy for help. But Mr. Malloy didn't say anything, though he, too, was looking strange now. His lips had shut tight and his eyes had a bright, steady glint as if he were suddenly angry, but wasn't going to let the faintest hint of it escape from him.

"Look, Sydney," Mr. Nichols said. "Have you — have you got a bicycle?"

"Why, no, I haven't, Mr. Nichols," Syd said.

Mr. Nichols seemed suddenly to cheer up.

"Sydney, what do you think of this idea: I'm going to get you a brand new Columbia bicycle! You know, one of

those fancy models with a klaxon and an electric light and a three speed shift and — would you like that, Sydney?"

Sydney looked puzzled.

"Are you going to give Joe and Eddie a bike, too?"

"Oh, no!" Mr. Nichols was very bluff and hearty now. "Instead of a bike, I'll take them up to the Gray Hawk camp. You'll be luckier than they are! After the two weeks are over, you'll still have a bike, while they —."

"But you said *all* of us were to go to camp?" Eddie reminded him; and at the same time Joe was saying, "Syd'd rather go to camp, I know he would!"

Mr. Nichols wiped his face with his handkerchief, and looked miserable.

"Boys, I — Mr. Malloy! Won't you —."

Eddie's Dad said briefly, "Tell them yourself."

"Well, you see — believe me, boys, I don't like this, but the Gray Hawk school is a very special kind of place. Believe me, I've had nothing to do with making the rules —."

"Tell them," Mr. Malloy repeated.

"The Gray Hawk summer camp won't take Jewish boys."

Eddie and Joe did not understand at first, they stared at Mr. Nichols. But Syd said, "Oh." And Syd got a white, sick look on his face.

"But why not?" Eddie demanded. And then Eddie said, "Wait, Syd!" for Syd had turned and was walking out of the room. Eddie started after him.

Mr. Nichols said, "Boys, Gray Hawk won't take Negro boys, either, or Chinese, or — but listen, just because one of you can't go to camp, that's no reason for the other two fellows to lose out, is it? I'm sure Sydney wouldn't want you to miss a fine vacation just because he can't go. Wait, Eddie! Let's talk this over!"

PART VI

SPECIAL USES OF THE PROBLEM STORY

Problem stories for 1st and 2nd graders.

The following account shows how role-playing can be used to relieve a disturbing situation in a classroom, to bring help to an individual child, and to aid a whole class grow in tolerance and understanding.

Mrs. Nichols, who taught 1st and 2nd grade in a suburban school, had 9-year-old Marilyn in her group. The girl should have been in the 4th grade, but had been put here in a combined 1st and 2nd grade because she couldn't do 4th grade work—and because the principal believed that Mrs. Nichols had the patience and warmth of personality to cope with Marilyn.*

On the playground, Marilyn was always a focus of trouble. She was the butt of playground mischief. Inside the classroom, she was still a center of furor: a disruptive clown, who would go through all kinds of antic movements with her hands and face and body, cavorting and mugging for laughs. She couldn't concentrate on work, and she kept other children from doing so by annoying and distracting them until they lashed out at her in irritation.

Marilyn was deaf.

And the only talk of which she was capable was gibberish.

She had been almost totally deaf from birth, and had never learned to talk so that she could be understood.

She was not a drab, apathetic child but a bright and lively youngster acrackle with energy, keenly alive to sen-

* The teacher in this true account of creative work is Mrs. Hildred Nichols of the Montebello Public Schools, Montebello, California.

sation and impulse. The trouble was, of course, that her energy and curiosity had no constructive outlet. Frustrated, it found expression in mischief. She acted the fool. She stole things. Inside the classroom or out on the playground, she was always embroiled in excitement: either upsetting other children or being the butt of teasing that drove her almost into screaming hysterics.

Mrs. Nichols could have asked that Marilyn be removed from the class. But she knew that if this were done, Marilyn would be permanently excluded from school, for she had a record of trouble-making. In the school which she had previously attended, she had repeatedly rebelled by running away. Several times she had not been found until help from the police had been enlisted. Here, Mrs. Nichols realized, with her, was Marilyn's last chance for an education. Her parents, with five other children to support, were too poor to provide special schooling for Marilyn.

Mrs. Nichols decided that she would *have* to help Marilyn become a cooperative member of the class.

But how? . . .

First of all, Mrs. Nichols got the P.T.A. to buy Marilyn a hearing aid. For the first time in her life, then, Marilyn could really hear.

Next, Mrs. Nichols asked for help from consultants in the office of the County Superintendent. It was arranged for Marilyn to have some special tutoring in speech and reading at home.

Marilyn's problem, however, was not merely to become able to learn, but to become accepted by her contemporaries and to become a functioning and cooperating member of the class.

Mrs. Nichols decided to use role-playing to help her with this problem. She then discovered that the materials she needed did not exist at 1st and 2nd grade level.

So Mrs. Nichols created them.

She wrote a series of two-minute stories on the general theme of *How it feels to be different.* She selected the kinds of happenings which intensely arouse the feelings of children, the kinds of pressures which make them behave explosively and unacceptably. And this series of stories—over a period of several months—she read aloud to the youngsters seated on the floor in a circle before her.

The first story, *Play Ball,* told about a crippled boy who could not run. He did take part in the ball games, however, for his classmates ran for him. They liked him, and they respected him: he was very skillful at making model planes.

Another story she wrote for her circle of rapt listeners was *A Big Boy Like You,* about a child who was so shy and got so fussed when grown-ups questioned him that he couldn't answer. And she read to her class the story *There's No Room,* telling how a child felt when he wasn't wanted, as Marilyn so often had felt. Mrs. Nichols read *The Lost Ring,* about a girl who sometimes stole things—though she didn't really intend to: the act was unpremeditated, and afterward she was just sick over having committed it.

"Have you ever felt badly about not getting something you wanted very much?" Mrs. Nichols asked her youngsters before reading *What Did You Get?* The story was about a boy whose family gave no presents one Christmas because of lack of money. Meeting his friends, the boy lied about what wonderful gifts he'd received. "Why do you suppose Johnny did that?" Mrs. Nichols asked the class.

Usually, after reading a story, all she had to do was ask a question to release a flood of reactions.

Discussion would be excited and eager as the children told details from their own experiences or from those of friends. Mrs. Nichols achieved several goals simultaneously: as the weeks passed, she made the point—established and

reinforced it, driving it home—that people may suffer not only from handicaps like a crippled leg which prevents running, but from other types of handicaps, too: like shyness, or not being wanted, or not having money. Moreover, she was guiding the children into sharing experiences and feelings and ideas. Not only through discussion, but through role-playing.

Often she had the youngsters dramatize one of the stories, and act out roles in it, spontaneously, without structuring or rehearsing, just improvising as they went along.

They stepped into the story characters' shoes. They stepped into Marilyn's shoes. They "identified" with Marilyn, gradually and increasingly. They learned how much she wanted to be liked. They didn't know the words, but they grew aware of the frustration, the feelings of rejection and shame, which so often Marilyn had felt.

They made growth. Learning how Marilyn felt, they began to sympathize with her. It was only natural, then, that they began to ease up on her. They stopped teasing and prodding her into screaming outbursts. Instead, they began to accept her. They started including her in games. She was chosen on teams.

The result was, finally, that she — belonged.

All the careful work Mrs. Nichols had done paid off! . . .

She had her class plan a culminating program for the end of the year, to which they invited the principal.

They showed him the things they had made in a construction unit. The pupils ran the whole show themselves. First and 2nd graders! One would begin, would tell what he had made, how he had built it, and what tools he had used. Finished, he would call on another child to rise and perform.

And Marilyn took her turn with all the others.

Marilyn—the nine-year-old who hadn't been able to hear, at the beginning of the school term; who had been the disruptive element in the classroom, the child who had to vent the frustrated life within her in making trouble, the pathetic one who had run away when her helplessness got too intense for bearing—Marilyn rose when called upon, and took a turn like all the rest in explaining her project. She didn't mumble it, didn't do a fragmentary job, but gave a clear and logical presentation which the principal could easily understand. Marilyn could communicate, now. Marilyn could talk intelligibly. She could hear questions put to her, and she could give sensible answers. When her turn was over, she called upon the next child and sat down. Just like anybody else.

Marilyn was no longer painfully "different."

An interesting footnote to Marilyn's story is worth adding: At the end of the year, Mrs. Nichols told the children that all had passed, and all were being promoted. "Me, too?" Marilyn demanded. "Yes," Mrs. Nichols assured her. And Marilyn wailed, "But I don't *want* to leave the first grade!"

Not only did Marilyn profit by this venture in teaching for better human relations, but the whole class was helped to grow in insight and sympathy. The effort Mrs. Nichols had made, to mould attitudes and values, *did* carry out of the classroom and onto the playground and into neighborhood and home.

Role-playing with mentally retarded children. In the course of a research project in Special Education, it was decided to try role-playing with a group of mentally retarded 9th graders. The teachers concerned were devoted and conscientious, and eager for any help which held promise for their students. They were, however, frankly dubious about role-playing. They doubted that it was practical with their slow learners. They believed that any presentation which called for more than six or eight minutes of concentration on the part of their

students would not work. The consultant said let's try it, saying that she believed, out of her experience with the problem-story procedure, that even mentally retarded pupils would be able to participate for considerable periods.

The consultant came to one of the special classes, in a big city junior high school. The teacher was a skilled, sensitive person who had encouraged his students to develop spontaneity through use of a home-made puppet theatre.

He introduced the consultant by saying that, since they had had so much fun making up stories for their puppets, he thought that they'd like to hear another kind of story which Mrs. Jones had been using with other boys and girls.

The consultant set the stage for *Clubhouse Boat*. This problem story had not been tailored to meet the specific needs of mentally retarded students in junior high schools but was written for 5th and 6th grade average students.

Nevertheless, these members of the special class gave the consultant their full attention as she read the story. It took twenty minutes to tell, with some dramatics and elaboration of detail. No pupil became overtly restless. Many of the young people expressed their feelings, during the presentation, in whispers and quiet comments.

When the consultant stopped, and asked, "What do you think Tommy will do?", there was a long moment of silence. Then the students began to talk.

These mentally retarded youngsters had ideas. They explored the consequences Tommy would face if he kept the money. With a little encouragement, several students got up and role-played a solution to the dilemma. Even a brain-injured girl who, the consultant had been warned beforehand, was often irrelevant in her comments, made pertinent remarks.

The class not only offered as many real solutions as "normal" classroom groups, but added considerations the

consultant had never before been given. Further discussion revealed that these mentally retarded youngsters understood the story dilemma very well—*because they had held jobs and had actual experience of similar conflicts themselves.*

The adults present who were observing, and who knew these young people well, were surprised and delighted at the amount of participation in both role-playing and discussion which this session brought forth.

Moreover, instead of showing an attention span of just 6 or 8 minutes, this retarded group participated in the role-playing for almost fifty minutes. This tended to confirm the belief among the adults that mentally retarded youngsters have abilities which have not been tapped for lack of media which release their powers.

When the period ended, several students came to the consultant and told her, "That was a good story!" and they asked her to come back after lunch because they wanted to put on a puppet show for her.

At one o'clock she came back to the classroom. At the suggestion of their teacher, the group put on a puppet version of *Clubhouse Boat.* And it was good! They recalled every significant element of the problem-story. In fact, they even inserted a scene which had been merely implied in the original. Their production was complete, the dialogue natural, and they acted out a sensible solution. And these were retarded youngsters!

When given material that touched upon the problems that were real for them in terms of the life situations they knew, they demonstrated a level of practical judgment that was considerably above the ability which the school had been able to elicit from them before. Role-playing, when structured through the problem story, enabled them to perform in terms of the daily life experience they knew, and they had the exhilaration of success rather than the frus-

tration encountered so often when dealing with academic materials.

Children write their own problem stories. A teacher who works with role-playing for some time finds that she has released unexpected potentialities in her pupils.

For example, it was suggested to the members of two classes who had considerable experience with role-playing that they might like to write their own problem stories.

The results were very satisfying. Pupils produced stories which were informative about the young people themselves, and therefore of help to the teachers in understanding their students. Some of the stories were used for role-playing. The two classes were so pleased with the results that they planned to do more writing.*

Several of these stories are reproduced below, with a record of how one class role-played one of the narratives.

1.

ROCK HAPPY JUDY

I was out in the backyard, playing with my friend Jack. . . . When my sister came up and hit me with a rock, and she ran around the house. Mother called Judy into the house and asked her if she hit me with a rock, and she said she didn't. There was a big argument between Judy and me. She said that somebody else must have thrown the rock from behind me. I didn't believe a word Judy said because it was all a lie. Of course just because Judy is a girl, I guess mother took her word, and told me to go outside and play and forget it. So I went outside and began to play, when up came my sister again and hit me. Then my friend and I went into the house together and told mother. Mother called Judy in again and we had a nice little argument and mother still wouldn't believe us. Now you try to solve this case for us.

---

* Guided and supervised by Barbara Celse, Supervisor, Orange County Schools, Calif.

2.
WORK AT HOME

My name is Jim and I want to tell you a story of my life.

My house has six living in it. They are my mother, father, brother, sister and brother-in-law. The reason my brother-in-law is living with us is because they are fixing their house.

I want to write this story because I don't think it's fair. Every night after six people have dinner at the house, they go to the other part of the house. My mother says, "Do the dishes son." I am the only living thing in the kitchen. I have to do the dishes and they go watch TV.

The class role-played this story. Jim, who wrote this problem, did not participate in the first enactment. However, he helped arrange the seating at the dinner table.

A.

Family around the table.

(The adults did most of the talking. They tried to find someone else to do the dishes.)

Mother: "Well, I think Jean (older brother, aged 19) should stop gadding around every night with his girl friend. He should help, too. Now, Jean, you just stay home tonight and do the dishes. It won't hurt you."

Jean: "I got a date. Why doesn't Pat (married sister) help?"

(They suggested everyone in the family at one time or another. They also proposed:

That everyone take turns.

That a dishwasher be bought—but this was immediately vetoed because of cost.)

At this point, the class questioned Jim to get more information about the family. It was discovered that:

- Sister just had a baby.
- Jean (the older brother) works all day and sometimes helps build a house at night. He's engaged.
- Father and brother-in-law work on the house they are building at night.
- Jim gets paid for doing the dishes.

B.

Family around the table.

(In this second enactment Jim plays his own role.)

Father: "Well, I think the women should wash the dishes."

Jim: (to brother) "Why don't you help out?"

Jean: "I'm too busy."

Jim: "But I want to see my TV program. I think he should help."

Jean: "You need the money more than I do."

Brother-in-Law: "I don't think Jim should have to do it all. Let's do them before we go to the house."

Father: "Well, you know, you aren't going to be living with us much longer. Your house is almost finished. It will be different then."

Then the class again began to question the family members.

To JEAN:

Question: "Why don't you bring your girl friend over and both of you help?"

Answer: "We'll be all dressed up!"

Question: "Well, she can wear an apron. I do.

Answer: "Gosh, I work all day. I have to have some time for fun. Besides, I help on the house some nights, too."

To MOTHER:

Question: "Why don't you help?"

Answer: "I work all day, too. Jim gets paid for this job."

To JIM:

Question: "How long does it take you to do the dishes?"

Answer: "Last night it took me about two hours!"

Question: "You don't know how to do them! I —"

The discussion then became a sharing of experiences in dish-washing, and rules for efficiency in doing the job.

The final consensus of the class's thinking was:

- Jim should have help sometimes.
- He needs to be more efficient.
- He could arrange his time better.
- Everybody has some job to do.
- And, furthermore, Jim gets *paid* to wash those dishes!

PART VII

IN SUMMARY

Teachers themselves should practice role-playing.

Human beings are complex. Problems of human relations are woven of many threads. To deal with such problems, the more knowledge and experience one has the better.

The goal of role-playing is growth in character development and insight into human experience. A teacher needs much insight to guide such growth. She needs all the tools which the profession can pass on to her. She needs tact, and the wisdom to know that failures must always occur—and often are only apparent, not real—and that small successes will, in the long run, add up to real achievement.

Basic to effective role-playing is rapport between teacher and learners.

The permissive classroom tone required for sociodrama must be real, not counterfeit. It follows, then, that the adult who is most liked and trusted by her classroom group will have the most success with dramatic improvisation.

No teacher or group leader should expect to do role-playing without experience and be immediately successful, or to avoid all mistakes in handling her group. Guiding role-playing may always be difficult for some teachers, and conversely, role-playing may come naturally to others, especially those who are warm, sympathetic and experienced in such classroom techniques as dramatic play and drama production.

Even for the latter, real success in role-playing is likely only after training. Actual participation in sociodrama by the teacher herself is especially helpful.

She should develop a keen sensitivity to the feelings of her students. She should become aware of the emotional health aspects of the procedure so that her handling of her pupils is always purposefully directed toward better human relations. Such experiences as attending a workshop in which role-playing is developed as a teaching technique, or exploring role-playing in in-service education meetings are good preparation for the classroom teacher.* It is also wise for her, when starting role-playing with her pupils, to request the aid of a consultant. These may be available through the school system, the county school office, university extension, or intergroup agencies.

A look ahead. As educators become more concerned with the emotional life of the child, a number of questions present themselves for serious consideration.

Should the teacher, relatively untrained in the field of psychology, be guiding children in the exploration of materials which may be deeply disturbing? It is sometimes argued that the teacher is not a clinical psychologist or therapist and may do more damage by her efforts than good. The fact remains, however, that whether teachers plan to stimulate children to examine critical life situations or not, such situations are frequently projected into the life of the classroom. For example, it is not uncommon to visit schools and find that teachers are tracking down some stolen article. In a teachers' workshop on human relations in the classroom, when such an incident is role-played, some very well-intentioned teachers concentrated their entire efforts on "trapping" the suspect. Surely such teachers need help in developing a point of view about child behavior, and in learning some non-threatening techniques for helping children explore their own feelings and motivations, and society's attitude toward behavior generally considered unacceptable.

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* Increasing numbers of colleges and universities are offering summer workshops in intergroup education and human relations. Many of these are offered in cooperation with the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Information about such workshops may be secured by writing to the nearest regional office of the National Conference, or to the national office.

All too often, teachers lecture children about undesirable behavior and actually deepen young people's anxieties about the ways they have used to solve their dilemmas. Here again teachers need aid in developing "permissive" procedures for exploring the social mistakes children inevitably make as they learn their way into a culture or subculture.

Many teachers are developing the psychological insight needed to help children in their developmental tasks. They are learning that (1) behavior is caused, (2) that it always occurs in a setting, and (3) that adults who wish to help children to grow into adequate individuals need to know the many strands and interrelationships in a child's situation. The opportunity to study the behavior of children under the guidance of child development experts is increasingly available to classroom teachers through the services of universities and colleges in school districts.

Success in the use of role-playing is greatly enhanced when the teacher becomes skillful in other classroom techniques. Knowledge of good discussion procedures, steps in problem-solving and non-directive counseling, all contribute to a skillful guidance of role-playing.

It has been the experience of the authors that when teachers use other forms of spontaneity expression in their program—such as dramatic play, creative drama and creative writing—children are much more free and responsive in problem story situations.

Can the teacher develop a sensitivity to the responses of her children so that she will know when she has reached the limits of her guidance skills and needs to call in a therapist? Some psychologists fear that teachers may arouse children's buried disturbances, and fail to provide the follow-up of needed therapy. Guidance specialists have long insisted that the teacher is a counselor, not always by choice but by virtue of her role as an authority figure and an agent of the culture. The extent of the teacher's counseling role depends upon her personality. As teachers learn more about

child development they may gradually become skilled in recognizing signs of great need in their charges. If pre-service and in-service programs of teacher education provide the means, it is our conviction that teachers can come to know when they have reached the limits of their role and where to turn for expert help.

We assume that children can learn that they are not alone in their dilemmas by exploring problem stories with which they can identify without feeling threatened. It is also our assumption that elementary and high school youngsters will best learn how to deal with their emotional problems under permissive teacher guidance and with the support and opposition of their age-mates. What the possibilities and limitations of this approach may be are still subject to extensive action research.

Meanwhile, it is our hope that the classroom teacher who uses human relations materials will increasingly become aware that all behavior is caused. That for every action, whether socially acceptable or not, there is a reason—and that it is the better part of wisdom to withhold judgment and to make a patient effort to understand the tangled and hidden roots that are always at the base of every act, however puzzling it may seem. To be patient, to make no snap judgments, to strive to understand. . .

For, in this way, adults can hope most to influence the personalities of the young, to help them become democratic individuals.

> We cannot hope to create democracy, let alone defend democracy until we who are educators—that is, who are parents and teachers—know how to bring up children who behave democratically because that is the kind of person they are. We cannot conserve democratic values until we are clear and honest and intelligent about "how democracy gets into the personality."
>
> —from *Children In The World Today*, by Mary Shattuck Fisher.

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